

Educating student nurses about chronic pain

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Certificate of Authorship/Originality

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Susan M. Shaw", is positioned above a horizontal line.

Susan M. Shaw

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the issue of educating student nurses about chronic pain. Chronic illness is a substantial health and disability issue across the globe. Chronic pain is a particularly prevalent chronic health experience, with estimates that between a quarter and a half of the world's population, experience some degree of chronic pain. A good deal of knowledge about the causes and treatment of various types of pain have developed in recent years. However, patients believe that their pain is not adequately treated by health professionals. The prevalence of chronic pain, concerns about the inadequate management of it, and the leading role that nurses play in assessing patients and providing treatment, make it timely to explore chronic pain in relation to nursing education.

This study focussed on exploring how student nurses think about and may respond to patients experiencing chronic pain. A number of misconceptions had previously been identified as being held by health professionals, and having the potential to detrimentally impact on their response to patients (McCaffery & Pasero, 1999). This research was designed to explore the extent to which those misconceptions about patients with chronic pain were held by student nurses during their pre-registration education. This phenomenon had not previously been researched.

The findings of the study suggest that attitudes and knowledge of student nurses about patients with chronic pain are inadequate. Further exploration of the findings suggests that the views held by student nurses are not positively addressed to any significant extent during the course of their undergraduate education. It is argued that ensuring appropriate knowledge is taught to students and linked to practice may play a substantial role in improving the practise of nurses and the experience of patients with chronic illness.